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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001488

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [EG](#) [XF](#) [EU](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN](#) [AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: FM SHALOM REVIEWS BUSY TRAVEL ITINERARY; BELIEVES

U.S. WILL PROVIDE ASSURANCES

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Shalom told the Ambassador on March 8 that in recent discussions in London and Dublin the Europeans had conveyed a preference for GOI-PA negotiations in the context of the roadmap, as opposed to unilateral steps. UK PM Tony Blair reportedly expressed admiration for President Bush's bold policy of sidelining Arafat. Shalom said reports from a Labor Party delegation that recently visited Egypt showed Egyptian President Mubarak is concerned about Hizballah and al-Qaeda filling any void in Gaza left by withdrawing Israeli troops. Shalom expects to hear from Mubarak that the GOE is willing only to patrol the border along Gaza from the Egyptian side, preferably with more than the lightly-armed civilian police allowed under the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. On U.S.-Israeli discussions about disengagement, Shalom cited the PM as saying that among the issues on which the GOI would seek U.S. assurances would be the right of return and Jerusalem. End Summary.

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FM Shalom Visits London, Dublin  
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2. (C) Reviewing his busy travel schedule this month, Foreign Minister Shalom, who was accompanied by Chief of Staff Ron Prosor and Policy Advisor Jacob-Shaul Dayan, briefed Ambassador Kurtzer on his visit to the UK and Ireland, and previewed his visit to Egypt, which will be followed later in the month with a visit to the United States. Referencing the "five points" he heard during his recent visits to Dublin and London, Shalom remarked that several elements of the European position sounded quite similar to that of the U.S. For example, he said, the Europeans emphasized that, while they understood the impetus for taking unilateral action, their strong preference was for bilateral GOI-PA negotiations. To this end, the Europeans pressed that any GOI action conform with the letter and spirit of the roadmap. In addition, the Europeans argued against any "relocation" of settlements to "strengthen" so-called "consensus" settlements that would be annexed, de facto or otherwise. Commenting on the British security plan, Shalom said that he explained to UK PM Blair that it did not make sense to provide financial support to the Palestinian security forces, even reconfigured under a unified chain of command, as long as Arafat ultimately directs them. Shalom noted with some surprise the admiration that Blair had expressed for President Bush's bold articulation, in his June 24, 2002 speech, of a policy sidelining Arafat. Blair reportedly characterized the assessment underlying this policy as "reflecting what everybody thought but was afraid to say."

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Next Stop: Egypt  
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3. (C) Previewing his upcoming trip to Egypt, Shalom said that Labor Party leaders who had recently visited Egypt had reported that Mubarak was not interested in assuming sole responsibility for preventing smuggling along the "Philadelphi" strip along the Israeli side of the border. Mubarak reportedly told the Labor delegation that Egypt would continue to act against smugglers, but only along the Egyptian side of the border. Asked why Egypt had not done a better job preventing smuggling thus far, GOE officials reportedly told the delegation that their deficiencies were a function of the constraints placed on Egyptian forces as part of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. (Note: That treaty allows only lightly armed police units to patrol the border. End Note.) Mubarak reportedly expressed interest in amending relevant provisions of the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt to allow Egypt to beef up its forces patrolling the border. Shalom also commented that Mubarak was reported by the Labor delegation to be quite concerned about the prospects of Hizballah and/or al-Qaeda assuming a foothold in Gaza once Israeli forces withdraw. Shalom expressed concern about Mubarak's interview published that day in "Le Figaro," in which Mubarak expressed strong misgivings about an Egyptian role in securing Gaza.

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GOI to Seek Two New Assurances in Context of Disengagement?  
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14. (C) Turning to U.S.-Israeli discussions about PM Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan, Shalom indicated that Sharon had told him that, among the eight or nine issues on which the GOI would seek U.S. assurances -- probably in a form similar to the "deposit" negotiated with Secretary Christopher during the Syria track negotiations -- would be two issues not specifically drawn from previous U.S. assurances: the right of return and "specific assurances" on Jerusalem. The latter, according to Shalom, would go beyond previous assurances. Asked about U.S. views on Sharon's plan, Ambassador Kurtzer cautioned his interlocutor not to believe all of the rumors circulating about "the U.S. position" on the subject. At this stage, he said, it is premature to talk about a final U.S. position. Ultimately, the President's view will be shaped by the entirety of the package the GOI puts on the table.

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PMs to Meet March 16  
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15. (C) Shalom confirmed reports that PMs Sharon and Abu Ala'a have set March 16 as the date for their meeting. He was skeptical about Palestinian motivations for holding such a meeting at this time, expressing the view that Abu Ala'a probably wants to prevent Sharon from taking the line in Washington that "there is no partner" on the Palestinian side.

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KURTZER